MAGAZINE SECTION

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# "THE MINISTER OF POLICE"

By HENRY MOUNTJOY

### CHAPTER IV—Continued.

De Richelieu, for his own sake would be compelled to act in the matter in such a way that there would be no chance of the scandal against the king ever escaping.

The baroness had used her appeal for De Lussac only as the opening gambit in the desperate and dangerous game for his life which was now beginning.

"Thank you, Monsieur," said she. "I knew that in appealing to you I should not be wrong." Then, seeming to dismiss De Lussac from her mind, "But, Monsieur, I had another motive for my long journey to-night—" She paused.

"Yes, Madame?"

"Monsieur, I will be frank with you. That motive was—myself."

"A most charming motive, but one which I cannot, yet, fully understand—"

"I had more truly said self—and more truly, selfish. Surely, Monsieur, that is a motive that any politician can understand? You see I am frank."

"I hear you say so, Madame, and you alarm me."

"In what way?"

"Why, Madame," laughed De Richelieu, "you are the first woman I have ever heard admitting the fact of her selfishness. It does not seem natural."

"And it seems to me," replied the baroness with a little grimace, "that I am the first human being to whom Monsieur le Marechal Duc de Richelieu has admitted the fact that he is capable of being frightened." She rose to her feet. "Monsieur, I will go, for at this rate we shall soon have no secrets to hide from one another. You are dangerous to me, I am dangerous to you." She moved toward the door.

"Stay, Madame," cried De Richelieu, perplexed and fascinated, feeling that there was something more personal to him in the visit of the charming creature than an attempt to enlist him in the cause of De Lussac. "One moment."

He had risen with her.

"For what?" asked she, pausing.

"For what? Petite mysterieuse! For what did you come these five leagues? Why did you face the darkness, the fear of bandits?"

"Ma foi," replied she, her hand upon the door handle. "It seems to me I came to confess that I was selfish, to make you confess that you were capable of fear, and all in the first few minutes of our interview. Heavens! Monsieur, as I said a few moments ago, if our interview were to last an hour, at this rate, we should have nothing to hide one from the other."

"You perplex me," said the marechal, now completely fascinated, but not knowing how to take her.

She laughed. "There you are again, Monsieur! More admissions of weakness. Monsieur de Richlieu, who reads women as other men read books, Monsieur de Richelieu, the most astute man in France, perplexed by an adventuress!"

"Adventuress!"

"There, again!" cried the baroness, opening the door as if to escape. "Another confession! O Monsieur, let me go, for if we remain longer together this interview will be destructive to both our self-respects."

De Richelieu took her firmly by the hand, closed the door, and led her back to her chair.

"Extraordinary and charming woman," said the old warrior as she let herself be led like a child. "You are not now talking to Monsieur de Richelieu, but to the marechal of France, who is at your commands, and who commands you."

"I obey the conqueror of Mahon."

"Then, Madame, as a good soldier, I command you to speak. Why did you come to me to-night?"

"Monsieur, I have forgotten."

"Forgotten!"

"I ought to say, I do not choose to remember. I would rather forget, Monsieur, I have changed my mind. When I came to you to-night I came on account of poor Monsieur de Lussac, but I admit I had the thought of asking for a favor for myself at the all but royal hands of Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu. Well, Monsieur, when it comes to the point, my courage is not there to meet me. And I say to myself, 'Why should I ask a favor of one who scarcely knows me?' Monsieur, spare my feelings."

"Madame, spare mine. I burn to be of service to you. Speak."

"Well, then, Monsieur," said she, as though suddenly making up her mind, "I would ask your help."

"Against whom?"

"Monsieur, I am beset by cats."

"Cats?"

"Madame d'Harlancourt hates me."

"Aha?"

"Madame de Stenlis insulted me today."

"Yes?"

"Monsieur de Joyeuse flung his mud at me."

"But he is not a cat."

"No, Monsieur, he is a cur."

De Richelieu laughed. "Well, Madame, and how can I help you against these people?"

"Oh, Monsieur, you have only to raise your voice and all these creatures will fly. But wait! I said to myself, who is there in all France that I can ask for a word of friendliness? All the men of the court are men of the world who would not understand me. There is only one, the Duc de Richelieu, a great soldier, a courtier, and a man whose age places him above the futilities of the world."

De Richelieu made a little grimace.

"I came here to-night and I found myself face to face with a man who, whatever his age may be, is not an old man, and—you see I am quite frank with you—I feared——"

"O madame, why should you fear?"

"Alas! Monsieur—an unprotected woman——"

De Richelieu drew his chair close to hers and took her hand.

"Madame," said he, "you have sought my protection. Why, then, should you fear your protector?"

"Why—I fear myself too. Now, you see, I am making more confessions. Believe me, it were better I should go."

"Ah, yes, a moment—that is what man always say when they can think of nothing better. Monsieur, the moment has passed."

De Richelieu, instead of releasing her hand, slipped down on one knee beside her; the fire in the old marechal's blood had broken into flame. Taking the captured hand in his left hand, his right arm slipped round her waist.

"Monsieur," said she, drawing slightly away, "that is encroachment."

"No, Madame, it is the smallest waist in the world."

"Monsieur, if I were a designing woman I might, now turn you round my finger. Oh, how weak are men!"

"Yes, Madame, men are weak, always, before loveliness."

"Then, Monsieur, be strong."

"I am; at the moment, perhaps, I am the strongest man in France."

"Then have pity on the weakest woman."

"I am all pity for weakness; though I hold you like this, it is only to symbolize that protection which is at your service. You say you have women enemies who are pressing you hard—"

"No, Monsieur, it is you who are pressing me hard, and when hard pressed, a woman cries out. Monsieur, I am about to cry out."

"A truce, then," cried De Richelieu, releasing her and rising to his feet. The baroness also rose up.

"The conqueror of Mahon calling for a truce! Monsieur, you are defeated!"

"I acknowledge it."

"I have wound you round my finger."

"Then, cherie, wind me round again," cried Richelieu, laughing, half pained, fire in his eye, and advancing victoriously upon her.

This was the real attack, and Madame Linden, with a little scream, such as women give when they see a mouse, outstretched her hands and held him off. Struggling with him, half laughing, panting, she suddenly drew back.

"Monsieur," said she in a low voice, "a moment—there is some one at the door."

De Richelieu, flushed and almost triumphant, turned to the door with a terrible oath. He opened it. There was no one.

"Ah, Monsieur, but there was," said she, still in that muffled voice that led the hopes of the old man heavenward. "I heard some one. Go into the corridor and see that we are alone."

He went into the corridor and instantly she closed the door and locked it on him. She flashed across the room to the bureau. The blood surging to her face, ringing in her ears, she seized the handle of the top right-hand drawer; it yielded. The drawer was still open; she pulled it out; on the top of a number of papers lay a folded document.

"Madame, Madame!" came De Richelieu's voice from the outer side of the door, as he tapped lightly with his knuckles. "Open! Think if any of the servants were to come!"

"Monsieur," cried she in an even voice, as she unfolded and glanced at the document. "Before I let you in, I must dictate terms."

"Anything," replied the voice of the duc. "Only open."

She saw De Sartines' signature, folded the document and gently closed the drawer. All the time she was speaking to him in that wonderful level voice that told nothing of her emotions or her triumph.

"Well, Monsieur, my terms are simple. You must promise me solemnly not to molest me."

"Yes, yes, I promise."

"Not to touch me." As she advanced toward the door she was putting the document in her pocket.

"I promise."

"On your word?"

"On my word."

"Well, then, Monsieur, I will open." She opened the door.

"Mordieu," cried De Richelieu, half laughing and more than ever fascinated. "What a position for me had one of the servants come!"

"And what a position for me, Monsieur!"

She was now flushed, laughing, excited; as though her success had electrified her mind, of a sudden a new plan full-born and alluring rose before her. She had triumphed on behalf of De Lussac; she had in her hand a terrible weapon. Another woman would have contented herself with that evening's work; not so Madame Linden. To strike all her enemies with one blow, to ruin De Sartines and to humble the d'Harlancourt, Madame de Stenlis and De Joyeuse at the same time, that was her scheme; and she determined that De Richelieu should help her in it.

"At least, Madame, you were on the right side of the door," replied the marechal, "and ma foi, but one might fancy that loveliness had locked herself in with you and you had changed clothes. Would that I had put my eye to the keyhole!"

"How do you mean, Monsieur?"

"Because, Madame, before you closed the door on me your beauty burned my eyes; now it blinds them."

"Monsieur," said she, glancing at the clock, "it is late, and I have trespassed greatly on your time. You have paid me a hundred compliments, you have held my hand, encircled my waist, allowed yourself nearly all the liberties which a man of pleasure takes with a woman of his sort. You have treated me, in short, as you have been accustomed to treat the ladies of the court. I am not a woman of that sort. I do not love you, Monsieur, I love Monsieur de Lussac; but always before marriage I hold that a woman is free to give or to sell her favors, and that it is a matter entirely between herself, her conscience and her maker.

"I wish to revenge myself upon my enemies, and if you will help me, I will say to you, 'Monsieur de Richelieu, when my revenge is complete, come to me and I will pay you for your assistance with—'"

"With what, Madame?"

"My lips."

"And what is this assistance that you require, Madame?"

"Oh, do not be alarmed; it is very simple. I wish you to invite me to dejeuner at your house in Paris to-morrow at noon."

"A thousand times, yes."

"But wait. I wish you to invite some guests to meet me."

De Richelieu made a grimace.

"And the guests—?"

"Are, first of all, Monsieur le Comte de Sartines."

De Richelieu laughed.

"Certainly, Madame. Who else?"

"Madame de Stenlis, Madame d'Harlancourt, and Monsieur de Joyeuse."

De Richelieu pursed his lips.

"What you ask is easy enough, Madame. What else?"

"Nothing more."

"But, Madame, I do not see your point. I invite you to dejeuner with these people; you all come. How does that help you to triumph over them? They will all be banded against you. You do not know these women of the court and what they are capable of."

"I do, indeed, Monsieur; but they don't know me. Please do as I ask and leave me only my wit, and I will bring them all literally to their knees."

De Richelieu rubbed his hands, then laughed. "Mordieu," thought he, "this ought to be as good as the Comedie Francaise." Then to the baroness: "Madame, I will do as you say. But the invitations must be despatched early to-morrow morning."

"Write them, Monsieur," said she, "when I am gone, and your servants can deliver them to-morrow early. Make the invitation urgent, so that it may override any pre-engagement these people may have."

"Leave that to me, Madame. I shall make it little short of a command."

"Ah," said she, "you are a man of spirit and sense, and I promise you, Monsieur, one thing: you shall have great amusement at your house in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honore to-morrow at half-past twelve."

"And after?" asked De Richelieu.

She laughed.

"I always pay my debts. And this is for earnest." She held out her lips and he kissed her.

Her extraordinary frankness, her golden voice, her beauty and personal magnetism had completely bound this old libertine in their pentagram: the thought that he was getting the better of De Lussac, a man so much his junior, did not lessen his satisfaction.

"And now, Monsieur, I must go. To-morrow at half-past twelve, expect me."

He followed her as she passed into the corridor and then across the great hall, where they parted. On the steps before which her carriage was drawn up, who should be waiting for her but Placide!

"What!" cried she. "You here!"

"Yes, Madame. Rosine told me that you had come here, and I took a cabriolet and followed you, as I have some very important information for your ear."

"And your information?"

"Madame, what I have to say has to do with Monsieur de Lussac."

"Then get into the carriage with me and you can tell me as we drive."

She made him get in and take the front seat. Then the carriage started.

All the way from Paris Placide had been racking his head for an excuse for having followed her.

"Well," said she, when they had cleared the avenue gates, "your information?"

"Just this, Madame," said the old fellow bluffly. "I am not blind."

"So you posted all the way from Paris to tell me about the state of your eyes! Well, then, Monsieur Placide, you shall pay your own expenses for the journey, and you can, now that you have relieved yourself of your information, get out and sit beside the coachman."

Placide noted her gayety and animation; more than ever he felt certain that whatever business had brought her to De Richelieu's, it was of a most important nature and that she had been successful in it. He had come with the idea of trying to pick up news from the majordomo, but at the last moment he determined to adhere to the baroness.

"Madame," he went on, quite unmoved, "I am not blind, and it has been easy for me to see that you are not disinterested in anything concerning the welfare of Monsieur de Lussac."

"Ah, Monsieur de Lussac!"

"Yes, Madame. He has been imprisoned. I heard the news this evening from the footman of Monsieur de Duras."

"And you came after me to Versailles to inform me of this!" The little lamp that lighted the interior of the carriage showed him that her eyes were moist. His fidelity had evidently moved her to the heart; he had not reckoned on this.

"Oh, Madame, that was nothing. Just a summer evening's drive."

"My good Placide," she replied, fidelity is a great deal in this world, where all men are unfaithful. But you have been a grumbling servant, you have set Rosine by the ears, and I doubt, even, if you have been satisfied with your mistress. In short, my good Placide, you are an intolerable servant, and as a recompense for your fidelity this evening I now discharge you from my service."

"What now?" thought Placide, at this unexpected turn.

"I discharge you as a servant and re-engage you as a friend, a salaried friend. Well, what do you say to that, grumbler?"

Placide said nothing for a moment. One might have fancied that she had touched the old scamp's heart.

"Cordieu! Madame," grumbled he, at last, "you are making a lot out of nothing. I am just your servant."

"And my friend."

All the way to Paris, behind madame's triumphant gayety was the fear of pursuit. If Richelieu opened that fatal drawer before she had put sufficient distance between them to make pursuit impossible, he would pursue her. It was, therefore, with a sigh of relief that she passed the toligate and the gates of Paris, and heard the familiar grinding of the wheels on the pavement of the city.

It was long after midnight, and the deserted streets lay under the moon. The hungry city slept, guarded by the Bastile standing like a mailed gaint in the moonlight.

At the house in the Rue Coq Heron the carriage stopped. Placide descended and helped his mistress to alight. As he did so, his hand, brushing her dress, felt something in her pocket; the folded parchment of the document could be distinctly felt through the brocade. His hound's instinct told him that here lay the secret of the journey to De Richelieu.

He followed her into the house, where she bade him good night and went to her room.

Having locked her door, she took the precious document from her pocket and read it carefully from the first word to the last. Yes, this was the infamous contract, in very truth, a weapon against De Sartines more formidable than a dagger. She went to the little bureau in the corner of the room and, taking a sheet of paper and a pen, sat down and began to make a fair copy of the document, word for word. When this was accomplished, she locked the two papers away and went to bed.

She awoke an hour after dawn, dressed without calling Rosine, and taking from the bureau the original document, folded it in a sheet of paper, making a little parcel of it which she sealed. Then, placing the parcel in her pocket, she left the house.

She had put on her plainest dress and a veil which almost hid her features, so that she might pass unnoticed through the early morning streets. Her plan of campaign was now quite clearly mapped out before her, and though she had no friend in Paris in whom she could implicitly place her trust, her genius had discovered a man the soul of honor, a man whom she could trust, and, moreover, a man who walked fearless of the King and De Sartines.

She had left now the broader streets and, inquiring her way as she went, found at last the Rue Plastriere, a street rather gone to decay. Some of the houses in the street were of great antiquity, gabled and weather-cocked, sunken in their foundations by age; remnants of that Paris which once showed its fantasy of roofs, vanes, spires and towers to the sun; the Paris of Louis XI, half university, half city; the Paris of Villon and Rabelais, through which in the winter wolves prowled; dominated by Notre Dame and the gibbets of Montfaucon.

At one of these old houses Madame Linden paused, verified the number, and then, going up the two steps that led to the dorway, rang the queasy bell.

Scarcely had she released the handle when the door opened and a man appeared. He was gray-bearded, shabby and rusty, attired in a snuff-colored coat the worse for wear and a broad-brimmed hat; he carried a book under his arm, and it was quite evident that he had not opened the door in reply to the summons, for, when he saw the veiled figure of the woman, he started back.

"What do you want?" said he, holding the door in such a way that he could clap it to at a moment's notice.

"Monsieur," replied the baroness, who, despite the desperate seriousness of her mission, could scarcely restrain her mirth at the appearance of the book-worm and his evident alarm, "I want an interview with you on a matter of the utmost importance to one of your friends."

"You know me then?"

"Oh, Monsieur, all Europe knows you, and though I have never seen you before, yet I recognize you at once."

The book-worm, allured by the voice of the charmer, came forward and, closing the door behind him, stood on the step.

He had a mirthless face, a face wherein lurked suspicion and distrust; an extraordinary face, so much of greatness and of littleness did it contain; the face of a practical man and a dreamer—he had even forgotten to wash it that morning, just as he had forgotten to brush his coat, which he held tightly clasped about him with one thin hand, as if to fend off the approaches of the world.

Thus in the early morning brightness stood Monsieur Rousseau of Geneva, a most difficult subject to deal with, as Madame Linden perceived, despite her veil. Soft words were of no use as a first approach to this evasive and self-centered nature.

"Well, Monsieur," she went on, "I can compliment you on many things, but there is one thing on which I can not felicitate you, and that is your sense of hospitality."

"Madame," said Rousseau, taken back, "I am bound on an early morning visit to my friend Monsieur de Rennes. Besides, Madame, I do not know you."

"Therefore you clap your door in my face? Ah, Monsieur, how easy it is to be a philosopher; to order an emperor out of your sunlight, to clap your door in the face of a woman! Come, I will explain myself, then, in the open air, if you will allow, me to walk beside you down the street. And now, directly to my point, your friend Monsieur le Comte de Lussac is in prison."

"In prison?"

"In the fortress of the Bastile, caught in the toils of Monsieur de Sartines, who will devour him as surely as a spider devours a fly, if I don't come to his assistance."

Now Rousseau had a real fondness for his disciple, De Lussac, but Rousseau, though he preached unrest, was no conspirator; he knew nothing of the Society of the Midi; he was a philosopher, a musician, a thinker; his social contract did not include fisticuffs.

"Madame," said he, stopping and facing her, "what you tell me disturbs me deeply. In prison! And what has this unfortunate young man done?"

"This unfortunate young man," Monsieur, has simply been carrying out in practice what you preach in theory. You have made him discontented with the world as it is, and he has been trying to upset it, succeeding only in nearly upsetting Monsieur de Sartines' coach."

"Upsetting Monsier de Sartines' coach?"

"I speak figuratively, Monsieur. He has been conspiring against the social order, and the social order has placed him in prison."

Rousseau fumbled with his book, standing before Madame Linden like a schoolboy. In the few moments of their conversation her intelligence had overridden his genius. She was taking him to task.

"Madame," said he at last, "I have nothing to do with conspiracies. I have never preached sedition. You say that my teaching has made the young man discontented with things as they are. Granted; that is what my teaching aims at. Since when was contentment a virtue? Take it even in art. What artist who is content with his work ever arrives at greatness?"

In another moment he would have plunged and hidden himself in the fountain of philosophy, but madame was too quick for him.

"Monsieur, you wander from the point. This is not a question of art but politics, and Monsieur de Lussac has arrived, owing to the discontentment you taught him, not at greatness, but in prison. It is your duty to help me, without in the least involving yourself, to extricate him."

"Madame," said Rousseau decisively, "if this is as you say, I will myself go and see the King."

"And the King will say: 'Certainly, Monsieur Rousseau; we will see, we will see.' And he will refer you to Monsieur de la Vrilliere, who will say, 'Certainly, Monsieur Rousseau, everything shall be done to clear this unfortunate gentleman.' And Monsieur de la Vrilliere will refer you to Monsieur de Sartines, who will talk about justice, whom, by the by, he does not know in the least. Oh, Monsieur Roussean, you are the greatest philosopher of your age, but among these men of the world your philosophy would lead you nowhere; the production of immortal books is your metier in life, not the conduct of quarrels with policemen. Leave all that to me. I shall free Monsieur de Lussac if you will only do one thing for me."

"And that?"

She took the packet from her pocket.

"Take this, and treasure it as you would your life. I shall probably send a servant for it this evening. He will show you this ring—" she exposed a cameo ring on her hand. "Give it to him. If you do not hear from me by noon to-morrow, you will know that I am either dead or in prison, for the people I am attacking are merciless people and do not care what weapons they use. In that event, take the packet yourself to Monsieur de Maupeou, the vice chancellor. In that case I shall be well avenged."

"But, Madame, what is this parcel?" asked the philosopher, not in the least delighted at the prospect of being made the minister of her vengeance.

"Monsieur, it contains the social death warrant of an unjust man, a man who is preying upon the people; it is also at the same time the order of release for Monsieur de Lussac. With that parcel in your hand, Monsieur, you can command events; you can, at least, release De Lussac, the man whom your philisophy has sent to prison."

"And the name of the unjust man?" asked Rousseau.

"Monsieur de Sartines."

"The lieutenant general of police?"

"Precisely."

Rousseau nearly let the parcel drop. Here was a nice imbroglio. Ten minutes ago he had put on his hat to leave his house, content with himself and at peace with all the world, except Therese; he had opened the door, humming a tune from one of his operas, and in a trice fate had seized him in the form of this veiled woman, thrust a weapon in his hand, and ordered him to attack De Sartines; that Tiger De Sartines, of whom, despite all his philosophy, he was very much afraid.

Unfortunate Rousseau! He was always a martyr to women; even that morning, before starting, he had suffered from a bad attack of Therese, escaping from her only to fall into the hands of Madame Linden.

"But, Madame, it is against my principles to use force in this fashion. I am but a student; my part in the world is entirely passive; the hand which is powerful armed with the pen is always at a loss armed with the sword——"

Again he would have dived into the vague waters of verbiage, and hidden himself, had she not caught him, so to speak, by the coat tails.

"Monsieur, you may be a student, but you are a man; and a man who loves and honors you has been imprisoned for no fault but that he followed your teaching, though wrong-headedly enough, perhaps. You have nothing to fear: It is I who will bear the brunt of the battle. I ask you only to hold the document in your house and in the event of my not communicating with you by noon to-morrow to hand it to Monsieur de Maupeou. He is a bitter enemy of this villain, De Sartines. Monsieur, believe me when I say there is no danger to you in the transaction. I am moving in it for no object but love. Monsieur de Lussac is my lover."

She lifted her veil.

Rousseau, before that loveliness, succumbed. He took off his hat and bowed to her, at the same time thrusting his book and the parcel into the capacious pocket of his coat.

He was always a sentimentalist. Though at times a philosopher, a musician, a botanist, a writer, the sentimentalist was always there, and the sentimentalist told him that the woman was speaking the truth and was entirely to be trusted. He hated meddling at all in the matter, but it seemed to him his path of duty was clear. He must do everything in his power to assist in the enlargement of De Lussac.

"Madame," said he, "I will act as you desire. Personal considerations do not weigh with me in a matter where the right is concerned." Then, having discharged this fine sentiment, he turned crusty. "Though I have nothing but your word on the matter, still I am constrained to believe it. I must now return and place this packet in safe keeping. Good day, Madame."

He turned and began to walk back toward the house. She watched him for a moment, then with a little laugh she ran after him. This dreamer had never even asked her name; suspicious as he was, always fearing spies and infaginary enemies, he had neglected this, the first question that a business man would have put to her.

"Well, Madame?"

"My name is—pardon me for giving it in full—the Baroness Sophie Anastase Therese Linden, and my address is 12 Rue Coq Heron."

"Madame," replied he grimly, "whether a baroness or a woman of the people matters not to me at all." He put his fingers to the brim of his old hat and shuffled on.

The baroness looked after him as he went, a shabby old man in a snuff-colored coat; testy, suspicious, casting his eyes about him, clasping his coat lapel with a veined and nervous hand, the strange figure of an immortal.

Then, satisfied that she had placed her weapon of destruction in safe safe keeping she returned to the Rue Coq Heron.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT SUNDAY.

### The Bewildered English.

From the New York Evening Sun.

Our friends, the English, who take a patronizing interest in our public affairs, are very much bewildered to-day. They have been reading with awed interest the accounts of the conventions at Chicago and that at Baltimore. They thought that Americans selected their leaders with clubs in their hands and pistols in their hip pockets. Then, lo, and behold, after all the strife, wrangling and bitterness, these absurd Democrats select as their man the former president of a great university. A strange performance on the part of persons who, according to the Britannic tradition, are in politics because they keep corner saloons.

## SCOOP THE CUB REPORTER

### Scoop Awards the First Prize in the Baby Contest

By "HOP"